SI429 eCommunities

Winter 2012 Course Syllabus (Draft as of 12/24/11)

Prof. Paul Resnick

Overview

This course prepares students to analyze online interaction environments with an eye toward design. For the purpose of this course, a community is defined as a group of people who sustain interaction over time. The group may be held together by a common identity, a collective purpose, or merely by the individual utility gained from the interactions. An online interaction environment is a space, accessed through computers or other electronic devices, in which community members can conduct some or all of their interactions. We will use the terms eCommunity and online community interchangeably, as shorthand both for communities that conduct all of their interactions online and for communities that use on-line interaction to supplement face-to-face interactions.

The course prepares students for roles as online community designers and managers. The first half of the course examines different types of online communities and introduces two analytic frameworks that are useful for describing online communities, third places and communities of practice, that describe aspects of social environments and learning environments respectively. Most online communities have some elements of each, to a greater or lesser extent. Students will draw on these analytic frameworks to describe what happens in existing online communities.

The second half of the course connects social science theories with the goals of online community managers and with the alternative social and technical design alternatives available to them. The central construct is the design claim: Alternative X will help/hinder the achievement of goal Y, in contexts Z. Students will draw on these claims to make design suggestions for new or existing online communities.

Logistics

Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-11:30 in 1230 Weill Hall

Professor Paul Resnick Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5PM Room 4344 North Quad presnick@umich.edu

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, a student should be able to:

- Identify the broad categories of communities and the kinds of activities that they include.
- Describe an online community using the concepts and vocabulary of Third Places and Communities of Practice;
- Make principled design and management choices for online communities to make them run better.
- Conceptualize a new online community and make high-level decisions about who it will be for, what activities it will include, and the technology platform to use.
- Write directly and succinctly.

Pre-requisites

There are no formal pre-requisites.

This course assumes some familiarity with technologies and the ability to explore them on your own. This course will spend very little time explicitly teaching about computing technology, but will frequently assume it as background.

Texts and other Readings

You should purchase the following books, or use them at the Shapiro Library reserve desk (see bibliography for details):

- (Wenger 1998)
- (Wenger, White and Smith 2009)
- (Kraut, Resnick, Kiesler, Ren, Chen, Burke, Kittur, Riedl and Konstan 2012) (Should be available in February)

We'll also be reading excerpts from several other books and articles. Links to electronic copies are provided through cTools, in the resources section.

For each session there will be assigned readings. Occasionally, there will also be optional readings. All of these will be available electronically through cTools, or are in the required books.

Communities

Together as a class, we'll be studying a couple of online communities. We will choose these collectively.

In addition, you will each pick a community to describe and either the same or a different one to make design suggestions for.

Class Activities

Each class session will consist of one or more of the following segments:

- **Quiz about the required readings.** You should read all the required material *before* class. Most days at the beginning of class there will be a 1-minute, easy quiz about the readings.
- **Discussion of the required readings.** I will randomly call on students in class to answer questions about the required readings. If you have not done the reading, it is best to just admit it and pass, but I hope that this embarrassing situation will not come up. If you read but aren't sure how to answer the question, say what you do understand and I will gently lead you to the important ideas in a Socratic dialogue.

Discussion will generally proceed in two phases:

- Description: statements or questions about what the author claims.
- *Critique*: arguments about whether the author is correct or what the author has left out.
- Application of readings to online communities. When the class session is devoted to conceptual material, we will work together as a class to apply the concepts from those readings to online communities that we will be studying together. That collective activity will be a warm-up for an individual activity of applying the concepts to a community that you pick to study. You will carry out that individual activity and hand it in before the next class.
- **Brainstorming about communities to study.** When the class session is devoted to exploring a particular kind of online community (most sessions in January), you will be asked to share ideas for communities of that type that you could study.
- **Critique of student writing.** Each student will have one of their short writing assignments publicly critiqued and collectively edited once during the semester.

There will be a shared EtherPad document for each class session, where we will collectively keep notes. If you're someone who understands better by taking summary notes while reading, please add your notes to the document before class. In class each day, I will display the EtherPad document on a public screen.

Assignments

- 3 1-page reflection articles on exploration activities:
 - R1: Wikipedia edit
 - o R2: configuring MediaWiki or FB Group or Google Group
 - R3: configuring Drupal or Ning
- 6 community suggestions (communities you could study); add these to a Google doc and be prepared to describe the community in class. These are shown as C1-C6 in the schedule showing due dates.

- 11 2-page write-ups, applying concepts to an online community you are studying. These are shown as A1-A11 in the schedule showing due dates.
- 7 feedback write-ups to other students offering suggestion for improving some of their 2page write-ups. These are shown as F1-F7 in the schedule showing due dates.
- Three 10-20 page papers. These will mostly be compilations of the 2-page write-ups, with appropriate revisions, plus a few transitions. These are shown as P1-P3 in the schedule showing due dates.

This is a 3-credit course, so you should expect to spend, on average, 12 hours per week on the course, over the course of the 14 week semester. Here's my approximate estimate of how that time would be split up:

- in-class time (3 hours)
- required reading (4 hours)
- weekly writing assignments and community scouting (3 hours)
- major assignments (3 hours/week averaged over the term)

Grading

Pass/Fail checkoffs: 25% (116 points available, maximum score = 100, no extensions for late work)

- R1-R3 (3 points each; total 9)
- C1-C6 (1 point each; total 6)
- A1-A11 (3 points each: total 33)
- F1-F6 (3 points each; total 18)
- 25 1-minute quizzes at the beginning of class about readings (2 points each; total 50)

P1 Community description paper: 25%

P2 Design suggestions paper: 25%

P3 Prospective community suggestions: 25%

Schedule

Session	DATE	TOPIC	READING	Assignment due
1	Jan. 5	Course	(Wenger, White et al. 2009), Chapter	
		Introduction;	2	
		Communities		
		and	(Powazek 2002), Introduction	
		Technologies		

			http://titanpad.com/9QzjApQKFn	
2	Jan. 10	Social/Profess	(boyd 2008) Sections 1.4-1.5, pages	
		ional	15-41 only	
		Networks		
			(DiMicco, Millen, Geyer, Dugan,	
			Brownholtz and Muller 2008)	
			http://titanpad.com/JG2wifKSFE	
3	Jan. 12	Health and	(Hwang, Ottenbacher, Green,	C1: Find a health
		Wellness	Cannon-Diehl, Richardson, Bernstam	and wellness
		Communities	and Thomas 2010)	community you
				could study
		(Guest	(Frost and Massagli 2008)	
		speaker by		
		video?	http://titanpad.com/ekvzcaZsj0	
		OneRecovery		
4	Ion 17	?) Draduction	(Forte Large and Bruckman 2000)	C2. Eind a
4	Jan. 17	Communities	(Folte, Larco and Bluckman 2009)	C2. Fillu a
		Communities	(Banklar 2002) pages 360-381	community you
			(Delikiel 2002) pages 307-301	could study
			Make an edit on Wikinedia (see the	could study
			resource "Wikipedia Edit	
			Instructions"	
			histidettolis	
			Optional: (Mockus, Fielding and	
			Herbsleb 2002)	
			http://titanpad.com/HgpLrHL07W	
5	Jan. 19	Third Places	Oldenburg (Oldenburg 1989) Chapter	C3: Find a
			2, pages 20-42	social/discussion
				community you
			http://titanpad.com/vHrpLGu8kD	could study
				R1: Reflection
				paper on editing on
				wikipedia.
6	Jan. 24	Gaming	(Steinkuehler and Williams 2006)	C4: Find a gaming
		Communities		community you
			(Williams, Ducheneaut, Xiong,	could study
		(Guest	Zhang, Yee and Nickell 2006)	
		speaker?)		
7	I 26	T	nttp://titanpad.com/dtG1t8tcOy	O5. Eindle
/	Jan. 26	Learning	(wenger, McDermott and Snyder	Co: Find a
		Communities/	2002) cnapter 1	Community of
		Communities		Practice (learning

		of Practice	(Kuznetsov and Paulos 2010)	community) you could study
			nup://ttanpad.com/yNHPj6QOVU	
8	Jan. 31	Q&A and Tech Support	(Lithium Technologies) Gold in Them Hills	C6: Find a Q&A or Tech Support
		(Guest speaker?	(Hansen, Ackerman, Resnick and Munson 2007)	could study
		Ackerman?)	Optional: (Adamic, Zhang, Bakshy and Ackerman 2008)	
			http://titanpad.com/cBJJ42kAUj	
9	Feb. 2	Participation and	(Wenger 1998) Vignettes and pages 45-50	A1: analyze a community as a
		Reification	(Wenger 1998) Chapter 1	third place
			http://titanpad.com/iTO3x0gWBF	
10	Feb. 7	Platforms Exploration I:	Configure a MediaWiki site or a FB Group or a Google Group	A2: analyze a community in terms of participation and
		MediaWiki, Facebook Groups, Google	http://titanpad.com/s9KakvdJXE	reification
		groups		
11	Feb. 9	Platforms Exploration	Configure a Drupal site or a PhpBB site; explore the features of Meetup	R2: Reflection paper on
		II:	groups (no free group creation)	configuring MediaWiki or FB
		Drupal, PhpBB, Meetup	http://titanpad.com/CfzD48Tx2U	Group or Google Group
12	Feb.	Mutual	(Wenger 1998) chapter 2	R3: Reflection
	17	Joint enterprise, shared repertoire	http://titanpad.com/gXDNRAVmR0	configuring Drupal or PhpBB
13	Feb.	Community	Wenger (Wenger 1998) ch. 3, pages	A3: Analyze a
	16	trajectories	80-98	community in terms of mutual
			http://titanpad.com/kjTobRyjcs	engagement (community), joint

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10 Mar Identity-based (Kraut Respick et al. 2012) A6: Describe what	19 Mar Identity-based (Kraut Respick et al 2012) A6: Describe what	10	Mar	Identity_based	(Kraut Resnick et al. 2012)	A6: Describe what
15 Commitment Commitment chapter through section contributions your	15 Commitment Commitment chapter through section contributions your	17	15	Commitment	Commitment chapter through section	contributions vour

	1			cend.
			on identity-based commitment (Wenger 1998) chapter 8	(2 nd) community needs (or will need) and make one or
				two design suggestions for how
			Optional (recommended):	contributions
			(Minow 1997) chapter 2*	
			(Burkhalter 1999)	
			http://titanpad.com/sw1bopPQjZ	
20	Mar	Commitment:	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012)	
	20	bonds and	Commitment chapter, remaining	
		norms	sections	
			(Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter	
			4, pg. 81-120	
			http://titanpad.com/yBRfTdJw30	
21	Mar	Regulation:	(Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler and	A7: Make one or
	22	Preventing	Barab 2002)	two design
		and limiting		suggestions about
		bad behavior	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012)	how your (2^{nd})
			Regulation chapter through coerced	community can
			compliance section	increase member
				commitment
			(Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter	
			15	
			http://titanpad.com/t3tMtQhKuC	
22	Mar	Regulation:	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012)	F4: written
	27	Norms and	Regulation chapter section on	feedback to a peer
		voluntary	encouraging voluntary compliance	about their A7
		compliance		
			(Martey and Stromer-Galley 2007)	
			http://titanpad.com/pn634orPKV	
23	Mar	Newcomers:	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012)	A8: Describe what
	29	Recruiting	Newcomers chapter sections on	bad behavior may
		and Selection	recruiting and selection	need to be regulated
				in your (2^{nu})
			(Crumlish and Malone 2009) Pages	community and
			70-75	make one or two
				design suggestions

			http://titanpad.com/2SICqd7ia2	about how your community should deal with that.
24	Apr 3	Newcomers:	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012)	F5: written
		Socialization	Newcomers chapter sections on	feedback to a peer
			retention, teaching, and protecting	about their A8
			http://titanpad.com/kWi1ISDzUu	
25	Apr 5	Startup:	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Startup	A9: Make one or
_	Г -	Carving out a	chapter sections on carving out and	two design
		niche	defending a niche	suggestions about
				how your (2^{nd})
			(Powazek 2002) chapter 1	community should
				handle newcomers
			http://titanpad.com/nhzz63iU84	
26	Apr 10	Tools and	Wenger, White and Smith, Chapters	A10: Make one or
		platforms	4, 5, and 8	two design
		Framework	http://titoppod.com/NZiCU2pr/h	how your
		Tranic work	<u>Intp://ttaipad.com/142j005pr4n</u>	now your
				community should
				define its scope
				1
				F6: written
				feedback to a peer
				about their A9
27	Apr 12	Tools and	Wenger, White and Smith, Chapter 6	P2: Cumulative
		activity		design suggestions
		orientations	http://titanpad.com/apg/pKKBbb	paper
28	Apr 17	Startup:	(Powazek 2002) chapter 2	A11: Describe your
		getting to		prospective
		critical mass	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Startup	community in terms
			chapter sections on getting to critical	of activity
			mass	orientations and
			http://titanpad.com/rhK46k1HV;	tools and
				configurations
	April	No Class:		P3: Cumulative
	24	papers due		paper on
				suggestions for
				prospective
				community

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If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way I teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; http://www.umich.edu/ sswd/) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

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